

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 INR-07 CIAE-00 /050 W
----- 101485

P 240901Z AUG 76
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4267
INFO AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 24547

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR LY US
SUBJECT: PRIVATE APPROACH ON IMPROVED U.S.-LIBYAN
RELATIONS

REF: STATE 208574

1. EMBOFF CALLED LIBYAN EMBASSY MORNING AUGUST 23 AND WAS TOLD DAKHIL ON LEAVE UNTIL END OF MONTH. LATER THAT MORNING, SPYROS REQUESTED APPOINTMENT WITH EMBOFF DESPITE LATTER'S INDICATION THAT DEPARTMENT BELIEVED PROBLEM SHOULD BE HANDLED THROUGH NORMAL DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS.

2. SPYROS PLACED MATTER IN THE CONTEXT OF HIS DESIRE, SHARED BY A NUMBER OF SENIOR LIBYAN OFFICERS, TO IMPROVE LIBYAN RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. HE ALLUDED TO VARIOUS ELEMENTS IN LIBYA OPPOSED TO THIS, NOTABLY JUNIOR OFFICERS, BUT WAS VAGUE ABOUT WHAT THE PROPOSED BILATERAL TALKS WERE INTENDED TO COVER OR PRODUCE. CLEARLY DISAPPOINTED THAT THE DEPARTMENT HAD NOT LEAPT ON THE OPPORTUNITY TO RECEIVE DAKHIL, SPYROS FIRST SUGGESTED THAT THE LIBYAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON MIGHT SIMPLY REQUEST AN APPOINTMENT FOR DAKHIL. HE THEN WENT ALONG WITH THE THOUGHT THAT NORMALLY DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS ARE CONDUCTED DIRECTLY BETWEEN PERSONNEL OF THE EMBASSY INVOLVED AND THE DEPARTMENT, AND, CONSEQUENTLY, THAT IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE FOR AN EMBASSY OFFICIAL (THE CHARGE) TO ASK FOR AN APPOINTMENT FOR HIMSELF, BRING

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ALONG WHATEVER OUTSIDE EXPERTISE (DAKHIL OR SPYROS)

HE MIGHT DESIRE.

3. SPYROS ALSO SAID THAT DAKHIL HAD RETURNED WITH HIM AUGUST 22 FROM A QUICK TRIP TO TRIPOLI AND ATHENS. HE GAVE DAKHIL'S PRIVATE PHONE NUMBER AND THE LATTER READILY AGREED TO MEET WITH EMBOFF LATE THAT DAY TO RECEIVE REFTEL MESSAGE.

4. DAKHIL SAID HE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ARMS PURCHASES FROM THE U.S., AS WELL AS EUROPE. HE WAS EMBARRASSED, HE SAID, BY HIS SIGNATURE TO THE C-130 CONTRACT, WHICH THE U.S.G. HAD PREVENTED LOCKHEED FROM FULFILLING DESPITE PREPAYMENT, AND THAT, UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, HE COULD NOT MAKE OTHER DESIRED ARMS PURCHASES IN THE U.S. LOCKHEED HAD TOLD HIM IT WAS NOW A GOVERNMENTAL MATTER AND HE WISHED TO GET AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT OF WHY THE U.S.G. HAD BROKEN THE CONTRACT. HE MADE NO MENTION OF ANY LARGER DESIGN FOR DISCUSSING OVERALL IMPROVEMENT IN BILATERAL RELATIONS, ALTHOUGH HE RECOGNIZED THAT WASHINGTON MUST HAVE SOME PERHAPS LEGITIMATE REASON WHICH MIGHT INVOLVE BROADER QUESTIONS FOR BREAKING THE CONTRACT. HE WANTED TO HEAR THAT REASON.

5. DAKHIL SEEMED TO ACCEPT THAT RECOURSE TO NORMAL DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS MIGHT BE DESIRABLE. HE FIRST INDICATED THAT HE WOULD ASK THE LIBYAN CHARGE TO SEEK AN APPOINTMENT AT THE DEPARTMENT AND THAT HE WOULD ACCOMPANY THE CHARGE. ON FURTHER REFLECTION, HE THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE BETTER TO HAVE THE LIBYAN GOVERNMENT APPROACH OUR EMBASSY IN TRIPOLI. HE FINALLY SAID HE WOULD CONSIDER THE MATTER AND LET EMBOFF KNOW IF THE APPROACH WOULD BE MADE IN WASHINGTON OR TRIPOLI.

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6. IN THE CASE OF WASHINGTON, HE WONDERED AT WHAT LEVEL A MEETING WOULD BE MOST APPROPRIATE. EMBOFF SAID THAT SOUNDINGS BY THE LIBYAN EMBASSY AT THE WORKING LEVEL OF THE DEPARTMENT WOULD GIVE THE BEST ANSWER. HE ADDED THAT A CHIEF OF DIPLOMATIC MISSION WISHING TO DISCUSS SUCH A DELICATE TOPIC IS SOMETIMES RECEIVED AT THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY LEVEL, ALTHOUGH SUCH MATTERS ARE CONSIDERED AT BOTH HIGHER AND LOWER LEVELS, TOO.

7. COMMENT: DAKHIL'S MENTION OF HIS EMBARRASSMENT ABOUT THE C-130 CONTRACT TENDS TO SUPPORT THE IDEA THAT HE IS OUT OF THE GOOD GRACES OF TRIPOLI. HE SPEAKS IMPECCABLE ENGLISH (NO ITALIAN, OR FRENCH, HE SAID, DESPITE HAVING LIVED HERE SINCE 1972) DEVELOPED DURING TWO YEARS' STUDY IN ENGLAND. ON THE SURFACE, HE SEEMED PRIMARILY MOTIVATED BY THE DESIRE TO CLEAR HIMSELF FOR HIS PART IN THE ILL-FATED C-130 CONTRACT AND TO ARRANGE OTHER ARMS PURCHASES IN THE U.S. IF HE WANTS TO PLAY A ROLE IN A GENERAL IMPROVEMENT OF U.S. - LIBYAN RELATIONS, THIS WAS NOT EVIDENT. AT FIRST BLUSH, DAKHIL APPEARS SHREWD AND HE IS ARTICULATE. SINCE NOT MANY SUCH LIBYAN OFFICIALS APPARENTLY SEEK OUT A DIALOGUE WITH US, HE MIGHT BE WORTH RECEIVING ON THAT SCORE ALONE, EVEN THOUGH HIS STANDING TO REPRESENT LIBYAN VIEWS ON THE BIG PICTURE SEEMS QUESTIONABLE.

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8. AS FOR SPYROS, THE TERM "OPERATOR" COMES FIRST TO MIND. HIS STATED DESIRE TO HELP "GOOD" LIBYANS FIND A WAY TOWARDS RAPPROCHEMENT WITH THE U.S. RINGS FALSE. SPECULATING ON HIS MOTIVATION, WE WONDER IF HE (AND PERHAPS DAKHIL) MAY BE PRIMARILY INTERESTED IN EARNING THE COMMISSIONS WHICH MIGHT ACCOMPANY ANY RENEWED DELIVERIES OF U.S. ARMS TO LIBYA.
GAMMON

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